



St. Peter's AC Mathieson Cup & Shield Race Report

15/01/2023

Mallusk was the venue for the latest installment of the Athletics NI Cross Country league with St. Peter's sending nearly 40 runners of all ages as well as lots of family, friends and coaches for support. The club Gazebo was set up early and ably by Mark Willis and Dom McGeough with Mark then coming out on the losing side in a fight with another club's tent. Newcomers to the XC season were Leah Balfour in the U13 girls race, Mulholland matriarch Lisa Mulholland and veteran triathlete Deaglan O'Hagan. A word of mention too for Alan Ritchie who donned the Newcastle AC vest for one of the last times pending a successful transfer to the black n' whites. New recruit William McBride was also there to lend support ahead of his first race for the club next weekend in Donegal.



First race up was the Primary School Boys where we had Dom McGeough Jr, Wyatt McMahon and Sean Monaghan toe the line. All boys ran superbly in the cold and muddy conditions, placing close to each-other and earning some well deserved medals and snacks.



The Primary School girls were next up for the 800m loop and running for St.Peter's were Amelia Armstrong, Aoibhe McCracken, Emily McGeough and Rosie Turkington. Very strong running from all 4 who all finished with smiles continue to improve with every race.



In the U13 race, we again had 4 girls running with a special mention for Leah Balfour who shook off some race nerves in competing in her first race for the club. Cadence Hamilton, Lucy Lavery and Zoe McCrory made up the other team members and again all 4 girls gave it their all on the twisty, undulating and mucky 2k course.



Next up for St. Peter's was the senior women's race in which we had our biggest turnout yet with 12 game runners making the start line. With 7 runners to score in the Mathieson Shield this was going to be a new and unique challenge for our multi trophy winning team and so it proved as the final points tally revealed a 11 point victory 🏆 over North Down AC. The 7 scorers who all ran fantastic races with every place gained making all the difference were: Gillian McCrory (2nd Overall 🥈), Orlagh McKavanagh, Patricia O'Hagan, Kate Mulholland, Emma Mulholland, Fiona Toman and Linda Farquhar. We had brilliant runs too with extra league finisher points gained from Bernie Austin, Lisa Mulholland (on her XC debut which she said she really really enjoyed 😊), Joan Melanophy, Grainne Crilly and Sarah McGeough. Being able to field so many runners has ensured that our ladies will extend their lead at the top of the NI & Ulster XC league table as we approach the final 2 events of the season.



The men as usual had to a lot to live up to and the ever improving team put in one of their best performances this season to finish 4th in the Mathieson Cup. Again we had a massive turnout of runners with 15 (fifteen) men helping to ensure that we were the best represented club on the day. Scorers in the Cup were James Monaghan (3rd Overall 🏅), Stephen Cochrane, Mark Willis, Matthew Mulholland, Gary McNally, Colin Armstrong and Seamus Melanophy. The rest of the points needed to retain 5th spot in the league were ensured by Sean Farquhar, Deaglan O'Hagan, Marty McCracken, Barry Shanks, Chris Sharkey, Paddy Conwell, Dom McGeough and Dwyer O'Connor.



The success of the cross country teams this season has been remarkable. From starting the season just hoping to be able to put out teams of 4 runners, we're now regularly exceeding the number required in order to gain maximum points. We also have had more juniors than ever competing on cold and wet days. Our ability to field large teams is undoubtedly our biggest strength, without which neither of our teams would be in their lofty league positions. When other clubs ask how we're able to get so many of our runners to line out for a relatively small club, we all know the answer lies within the positive, friendly and family atmosphere that has been instilled and fostered by coaches Brian, Dwyer and Fiona and by everyone within the club individually.



We have at least one more race in Stormont on the 11th February and would encourage anyone who has not yet tried cross country to give it a go and experience the craic and camaraderie that goes with it.